



Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance

Testimony of Merrill Gay on HB 5449
An Act Concerning the Alignment and Merging of Early Care and Education
Funding Streams, Eligibility, Rates and Policies

Education Committee

March 14th , 2018

Senators Slossberg and Boucher, Representatives Fleischmann and Lavielle, Members of the Committee: My name is Merrill Gay and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance. The Alliance is a coalition of over a hundred organizations ranging from individual childcare programs to statewide research and advocacy organizations. We represent a wide range of organizations that care for, and about, our youngest children.

Thank you the opportunity to testify on this bill. The Connecticut Early Childhood Alliance supports HB 5449. We applaud the effort to explicitly add infants and toddlers to the mission of the Office of Early Childhood and establish a priority for them in Care4Kids, our child care subsidy program.

The second provision that we strongly support is Section 8 of this bill to give OEC the authority to review and revise payment rates under the School Readiness and Child Development Center programs. Currently, payment rates are set in law. That means that we typically go 5 to 7 years between rate adjustments, which means right now there are non-profit providers serving low income families that are only able to operate their School Readiness classrooms by fundraising \$500 to \$1,000 per child.

The Child Development Centers provide the same year-round programing and have to meet the same requirements as the School Readiness programs but are currently paid \$300 less per child. This has been a long running problem that we hope to see resolved by this bill.

Finally, Section 2 of this bill recognizes the need to evaluate program effectiveness. Particularly in a time of dwindling state resources, it is really

important to know that the programs you are funding are effective. How many good programs do you know that have taken 5% cuts year after year and now just are shells of what they used to be? Wouldn't it be better to know which programs are really effective and cut something that isn't to keep the effective ones intact?

Our one concern is that Section 2 to proposes to fund this evaluation by authorizing OEC to use up to 2% of the appropriation for a number of programs. We would much rather see the legislature appropriate the additional funds to pay for this evaluation than take it from program funds.

Thank you again for this opportunity to provide testimony, and we look forward to working with you to ensure a brighter future for our youngest children.